The BLUE BOOK of BIRDS OF AMERICA

JAYS, LARKS, ORIOLES, GRACKLES,
FINCHES, SPARROWS, GROSBEAKS,
BLACKBIRDS, BUNTINGS, ETC.

Illustrated in Color

JAMES H. LEVI

CAMP WIGWAM

#68

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The BLUE BOOK *of*

BIRDS OF AMERICA

Jays, Larks, Orioles, Grackles, Finches, Sparrows, Grosbeaks
Blackbirds, Buntings, etc.

Text by FRANK G. ASHBROOK *Illustrations by* PAUL MOLLER

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PREFACE

BIRDS are beautiful and graceful creatures. Not only do birds satisfy our esthetic sense through their handsome plumage and their sweet voices, but they are marvelously adapted to their respective fields of activity. They are a valuable asset because they depend largely for their food on insects which are injurious to plant life. No other creatures are so well fitted to capture flying insects as swallows, swifts, and night hawks. The wrens, trim of body and agile of movement, creep in and out of the holes and crevices and explore rubbish heaps for hidden insects. The woodpecker, whose whole body exhibits wonderful adaptation of means to end, is provided with strong claws for holding firmly when at work, a chisel-like bill driven by powerful muscles to dig out insects and drag forth the concealed larvae safe from other foes. The game birds furnish sport for great numbers of people who love to go afield with dog and gun. Certain kinds of game birds such as quail, pheasants and ducks are raised in considerable numbers on preserves and on farms because of their value for commercial purposes.

This book is designed to furnish some knowledge of birds and to encourage more interest in their habits. Forty-seven birds that inhabit various parts of the country are described. A colored illustration of each is given so as to enable the reader to identify the bird. The descriptions of the birds are necessarily brief, but they are believed to be sufficient to acquaint the reader with the most prominent characteristics.

Special acknowledgment is due the Bureau of Biological Survey, the National Association of Audubon Societies and the American Ornothological Union for the liberal use which has been made of their publications. Much material has also been taken from the two volumes entitled "Birds of New York."

Every picture represents a male of the species, the measurements being given from tip of bill to tip of tail.

STELLER'S JAY

(Cyanocitta stelleri)

Length, 12¼ inches

THERE are many handsome blue jays, but Steller's jay, with its blue body and high crest is the "dandy" of them all. Fine plumage, however, does not conceal quite all its faults from those who know the bird. It is both a nest robber and a cannibal, and has been found guilty of eating birds' eggs and young birds. It also consumes acorns, chestnuts, and beechnuts. Mrs. Florence Merriam Bailey speaks of its note as a squall, as it flirts its tail and dashes about through the woods. More shy and retiring than the blue jay of the eastern states, it seldom visits the orchard or the vicinity of the ranch buildings. This jay lives in the forests in the southern Rocky Mountain section, including the pine forests of Arizona, and in mountain ranges of New Mexico. As happens with many other species, there are several slightly varying local forms of Steller's jay in the Rocky Mountain section of the United States and Canada.

Steller's Jay

CANADA JAY

(Perisoreus canadensis)

Length, 11½ inches

THE Canada jay is considered by many the cheekiest of the birds. Its confidence in mankind makes the "whiskey jack," as it is popularly called, a great favorite among lumbermen, trappers, and campers in the northern woods. Moose bird is another name applied to it. Fearlessly it enters the camp and carries away everything, whether edible or not. Some of the pranks it plays serve to enliven otherwise tedious days for dwellers and visitors in the great expanses of lonely forests. "Canada Jack's" general description is as follows: The forehead, including the nasal tufts, forepart of the crown, sides of head, chin, throat and chest are white. The back, shoulders, lesser wing-coverts, rump, and upper tail-coverts, are plain mouse-gray. The wings and tail are slate-gray and the primaries slightly more bluish. The underparts of the body are plain drab-gray and sometimes almost quite white. Its notes include a hoarse *ca-ca-ca* and other sounds. As a songster "Jack" is considerably more versatile, though no more musical, than the blue jay. It does not confine its activities to the eastern parts of the Dominion for which it is named, but frequently invades the neighboring republic —the United States—and visits in northern New York, New England, and other border-line sections. While snow is still on the ground and often when the mercury is below zero this bird begins to nest. Its three or four eggs are gray, speckled and spotted with a darker shade of the same color. The Canada jay usually builds its nest on the lower branches of pine and other cone-bearing trees. Twigs, moss, and feathers are used in the construction

of the home. There are three variant forms of the Canada jay. In the West in the Rocky Mountain Region, from central British Columbia, southern Alberta, and southwestern South Dakota to Arizona and Nebraska is the white-headed or Rocky Mountain jay. It is larger and lighter colored than the Canada jay. The entire head is white except the space just around and behind the eyes, which together with the hindneck, is slate-gray. In the wooded parts of Alaska and the adjacent part of Canada we find the Alaska jay. It is a Canada jay that has put on a dusky hood over its crown leaving only its forehead white. In Labrador is found a relative known as the Labrador jay. which has deeper black markings than those of the Canada jay on the back of the head and extending around the eye.

Canada Jay

Blue Jay

BLUE JAY

(Cyanocitta cristata)

Length, 11½ inches

THIS is one of our most beautiful and best known birds, but unfortunately it has a bad reputation. Blue is the prevailing color of the bird. It wears a black collar and is barred with a darker shade of blue at regular intervals, and the ends of the outer feathers are white. The crest on the head may be stiffly erected. Both sexes are indistinguishable in plumage or in behavior. The blue jay builds its nest in low evergreens. The nest is of twigs and sticks. Four eggs, pale greenish-blue speckled with brown, are laid. The blue jay is often reported as feeding on the eggs and young birds of its neighbors, but some think this wickedness is exaggerated. The common call is a two-syllable whistle, but birds of this family make an endless variety of sounds mimicking other birds. The range of the blue jay is east of the Rocky Mountains and from the Gulf of Mexico to Labrador. Only those birds residing in the most northern part of this range migrate. A smaller jay known as the Florida jay is found in the state for which it is named.

CROW

(Corvus brachyrhynchos)

Length, 19¾ inches

WITH the possible exception of the robin, the crow is the best-known bird in America, but it is not well liked. High in the trees this sable bird places its nest and there, in April, are laid four to six green eggs thickly marked with brown. The male and the female are alike in color. Well-known is the raucous caw of the crow, animating wintry wastes as a bird army flies hither and yon in search of convenient cornfields. To ragged dummies that stand in the fields and gardens, it has imparted the name "scarecrow," for despite its marauding habits, it is shy of men. During the winter they roost in colonies. In repose, the crow is a graceful enough bird, with its well-curved wings and straight tail. When aroused, however, as it screams defiance, the crow bunches its body, pushes its head forward, pulls up its wings and droops its tail, all of which gives it a rather bedraggled appearance.

Crow

Raven

RAVEN

(Corvus corax sinuatus)

Length, 26½ inches

At a distance the raven, made famous by the poet Poe, looks much like a large crow, but closer inspection will show that it is a much larger bird, and its deep, harsh notes once heard will never be mistaken for the call of the crow. Cliffs and trees are the domiciles of this black, croaking fellow, and its brilliant plumage furnishes the adjective "raven-hued," used when describing an intensity of blackness. The raven has long, pointed throat feathers quite different from the short, rounded ones of its near relative. Ordinarily it is seen in the United States only in a few localities in Oregon, Montana, and South Dakota. The belief that the raven is destructive to young birds' eggs and to game is an inference rather than the result of close observation. Ravens may be seen during the summer time about the garbage piles in the Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. They may be recognized by their size, and very large bill.

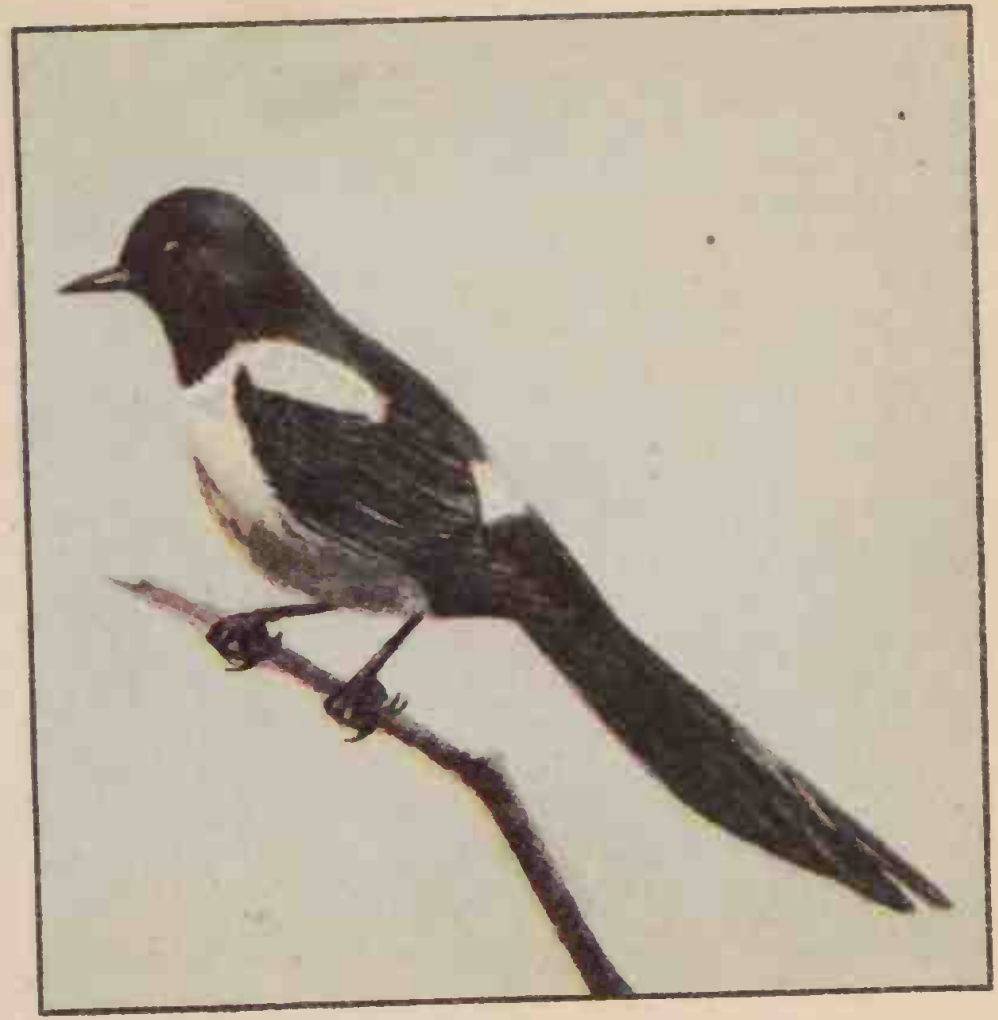
MAGPIE

(Pica pica hudsonia)

Length, 19½ inches

THIS attractive black-and-white bird is a member of the crow family. It has an appetite for flesh and is condemned for destroying bird eggs and young birds. A loud, harsh *cack, cack* is the common note of the magpie, but it utters a variety of imitations. Its nest is a large, globular affair built in bushes and trees at distances from four to fifty feet from the ground. It is built of sticks and lined with grass and mud. It is completely closed except for an opening at one side. The four to six eggs are white, thickly speckled with yellowish brown. The main diet of the bird consists of insects such as black crickets and grasshoppers. Its color is a lustrous black with changing iridescence, and sharply contrasting white underparts and patches on shoulders and wings.

The yellow-billed magpie of California is similar except that the bill and the naked place at its base are yellow instead of black. The range of the common magpie extends from Alaska to Arizona and from the plains to the Cascade mountains.



Magpie

HORNED LARK

(Otocoris alpestris)

Length, 7¼ inches

A MOST characteristic feature of the horned lark is the black tufts, or horns, from which its common name is derived. It is a small and hardy bird and comes to the United States in winter from its nesting places in Labrador and the Hudson Bay country. It is a ground-loving bird of the open country rather than the forests, and during the day when hunting on earth for food it may walk or run, but never hop. The flight of the horned lark is hesitant. It usually starts up hurriedly from the ground, uttering short, whistled notes. This is very characteristic of this lark and when disturbed it flies straight away for a short distance only to take a swing around and land near the starting point. One finds these birds in a great variety of places in weedy or freshly plowed fields; on meadows or other waste places; in closely grazed pastures and stubble fields. In the far west they live in hot desert valleys, on level grassy prairies, in foothills, and even on bare mountain peaks.

During the fall and winter months they are found in great numbers along the beaches and salt marshes of the coasts and on the shores and in the marshes and muddy flats surrounding inland lakes.

A black mark across the breast and two small pointed tufts of feathers above the eyes make the horned lark easy to recognize. Weed seeds form the chief food supply for this bird, and it ranks high among the weed destroyers. The horned lark also is an active enemy of insect pests, especially in the nestling stage.

Horned Lark—Continued

Horned larks nest early, often before the snow has disappeared from the ground. When a-wing, during the mating season, they have a joyous, lilting song, somewhat resembling that of the bobolink. During the winter period they range as far south as Illinois and South Carolina. Hollows in the ground, lined with grass, serve the horned lark as a nest. Usually, this is hidden by overhanging sod or a stone. The eggs, three to five in number, are speckled and blotched with gray and brown and have a grayish ground color. Several smaller relatives of the horned lark are residents of the United States, among them being the prairie horned lark and the desert horned lark. The prairie bird has a white line over the eye, and is found in the Mississippi Valley. The desert horned lark, less distinctly marked than its prairie cousin, is found west of the Mississippi and as far north as Alberta, Canada.

Horned Lark

Starling

STARLING

(Sturnus vulgaris)

Length, 8 inches

THIS bird is not a native of the United States. It was brought here from Europe in 1890 and placed in Central Park, New York City. It is now a familiar bird in most of the region east of the Mississippi River, especially in the Middle Atlantic States and Southern New England. Its coat is metallic green and purple, heavily spotted both above and below with buff and white. It is a hardy, muscular, and powerful bird and has the physical characteristics of a crow. It lives about the streets and in parks, building in the framework of elevated railroads and in towers and alcoves of the tall buildings in the larger cities. A long-drawn note, like that used in calling a dog, is the starlings most common cry, but it has many others, including mimicking calls of other birds. It often has two broods during the season. In mid-May the young starlings make the welkin ring with their cries for food. Later, the birds assemble in small groups, which, still later, are combined to form flocks of thousands.

BOBOLINK
(Dolichonyx oryzivorus)
Length, 7 inches

WHILE clad in its neat suit of black, white, and buff, this bird is known as the bobolink. Its song is different from that of any other bird, so rapid and bubbling that the notes fairly fall over each other. *Tink, tink* sounds its shortened call as it skims across the sky on its journey of thousands of miles. From four to six eggs, white, heavily spotted, clouded, and blotched with brown are laid in its nest on the ground late in May or early in June.

In July, after the bobolinks gather in flocks, the males change their plumage for a buff dress, like that of the female. Bobolinks nest from northern New Jersey and Kansas to Manitoba and New Brunswick. By the end of August the bobolinks have left their breeding grounds. They reach the rice fields in the South as the crop is ripening. This useful bird of the North, now becomes a serious pest in the South. Here it is known as the ricebird or reedbird.

After fattening in the rice fields, the bobolink continues by way of Florida to northwestern Argentina, where it spends the winter.

Bobolink

Cowbird

COWBIRD

(Molothrus ater)

Length, 8 inches

THE cowbird gets its name from the fact that it associates with cattle, for the purpose of catching the flies that frequent them while grazing, or the other insects in the fields disturbed by the movements of the herds. The cowbird, however, does not limit its activities to the pasture but visits garden, field, wood, and orchard, and often, flocking with the blackbirds, roosts in the marsh. The cowbird has the trait of shifting its family cares to other birds. Being a member of a "shiftless lot," it neither makes a nest of its own nor cares for its young, and instead of preparing a nest, the female cowbird slyly lays her eggs in the nests of smaller birds when the owners are absent. The male bird is colored a glossy greenish black, with a brown head. The female and young are dull gray in color. A low *chack* is the cowbird's call, as it spreads its wings and tail, and the male also utters a liquid, wiry squeak.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD

(Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus)

Length, 10 inches

A DWELLER of the marshes, the yellow-headed blackbird builds its nest of rushes woven about reeds growing in the water. These birds breed and migrate in large flocks, sometimes numbering thousands of birds. The male, apparently believing himself to be quite a singer, entertains his mate with a variety of queer, squeaking calls and whistles, produced during seemingly painful contortions. To the female is left the duty of hatching the eggs and caring for the young. The male is black with bright yellow head and breast. The female's coat is brownish and the head feathers are paler than those of the male and are mixed with brown. The rush-woven nest usually is placed from four inches to two feet above the water and is quite deep. In it are laid from four to six grayish eggs, profusely speckled with pale brown. The range of these birds is west of the Mississippi.

Yellow-Headed Blackbird

Red-Winged Blackbird

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

(Agelaius phoeniceus)

Length, 8½ inches

THE red-winged blackbird dwells in marshy places. Its *kong-quer-eeee* is as sure a sign of the presence of water as is the croaking of the frogs in the spring. The male in spring and early summer is unmistakable with its brilliant red shoulders. In winter its feathers are tipped with brown, and the colors are less marked in the young. The feathers of the streaked female are grayish brown with bits of red on the shoulders. Except when nesting, the red-wing lives in flocks. The nest is built in alders or button bushes, and sometimes on the ground. Although the birds arrive at their nesting marshes in March, their pale blue eggs, spotted, blotched, scrawled, are not laid until May. Eastern North America, from Florida to Canada is the home of the red-wings during the nesting season. In winter they are found southward from Maryland. Seeds of ragweed, barnyard grass, and smartweed are favorite foods of the red-wings, though when these are not available they will eat corn, wheat, and oats as well as numerous insects.

MEADOWLARK

(Sturnella magma magma)

Length, 10½ inches

THE meadowlark's high, clear whistle is one of the most welcome bird songs of the early spring. The meadowlark is a quail-like bird, and has yellow underparts and a black breast-crescent. White outer tail feathers are shown when it flies. The bird's alarm call is an unmusical *dzit* or *yert* and a string of beady metallic notes.

Its nest is built on the ground among the dead herbage from the last year's growth. It is usually overarched and skillfully hidden to protect the eggs and the sitting bird from view and the weather. The meadowlark lays from four to six white eggs, speckled with brown. The bird is found from Pennsylvania southward throughout the winter. The bulk of the species is migratory from the Northern States. Insects form the major part of the meadowlark's diet. Grasshoppers and crickets are their favorite food. Although migrating flocks, before being broken up for the nesting season, sometimes destroy sprouting corn, the meadowlarks must be considered friends rather than enemies of the farmer.

Meadowlark

Western Meadowlark

WESTERN MEADOWLARK

(Sturnella neglecta)

Length, 8¼ inches

THE western meadowlark is rarely seen east of the Mississippi River. It is grayer than its kinsman, with disconnected tailbars and yellow feathers spreading along the sides of the throat. If, before it takes wing, you should see it plainly in the grass, you can hardly miss the fine yellow breast with its sharply drawn crescent of glossy black; and when it springs into the air and speeds away in its peculiar half-fluttering, half-sailing flight, the white outer tail-feathers are equally conspicuous. The call notes and songs of the two meadowlarks differ, and if the eastern bird plays the fife, then that of the West plays the flute, its bubbling grace notes contrasting with the straight whistle of its relative. The birds, however, have similar food habits and are much alike in size and form. Like the eastern bird, the western meadowlark preys on insect pests and seems to be especially fond of alfalfa and cotton weevils. Grain is eaten mostly in winter and spring and consists, therefore, for the most part, of waste kernels.

ORCHARD ORIOLE

(Icterus spurius)

Length, 7 inches

One of the most useful birds that we have is the orchard oriole. As the name indicates, it prefers to live in the orchards, where worms, caterpillars, beetles, and grasshoppers, its chief supplies of food, are plentiful. It is gracefully formed and the male wears a rich, but not dazzling, coat of chestnut and black, while the female's attire is yellowish and gray. The young male's coloring is similar to that of the female but he has a black face and throat. The orchard orioles have a cheery and pleasing warble, rich, rapid, and loud, and a chattering note of alarm. The nest is a beautiful basket of grass, woven into a deep cup and usually placed in the forks of trees or bushes. Often these nests are made of green grasses. From four to six eggs are laid, white but speckled, scrawled, and spotted with black and brown. States east of the Plains from the Gulf to Massachusetts and Michigan are the breeding ground of the orchard oriole.

Orchard Oriole

BALTIMORE ORIOLE

(Icterus galbula)

Length, 8 inches

BRILLIANCE of plumage, sweetness of song, and faultless food habits make the Baltimore oriole a favorite with mankind. It is a sociable bird and likes human company. Its attractive, basket-shaped nest usually is hung near a house, from the extreme end of a bough, and often within easy reach from a window. This nest, woven from bits of string and grasses, is so securely fastened to the branch as to make it safe even in stormy weather and is so placed as to be out of reach of enemies. Children often find amusement by furnishing bits of colored yarn for the bird and watching it weave the bits into its nest. Hang-nest, fire-bird, and golden robin are other names applied to this oriole. Linnaeus, the great naturalist of the eighteenth century, published in 1766 a scientific description of this bird and noticed that its colors were the orange and black of Lord Baltimore's family; he named it after the baron, and that is why it is called the Baltimore oriole.

The beautiful male bird is described as follows: The head, neck and shoulders are a uniform black and black on the throat extends into the middle portion of the chest. The rump, upper tail-coverts, lesser and middle wing-coverts, and underparts of the body, are rich orange or orange-yellow. The wings, except the lesser and middle coverts, are black and the greater coverts broadly tipped with white. The wing feathers are more or less edged with the same color. The middle pair of tail-feathers are black except the concealed basal portion. The remainder of the tail is light orange or orange-yellow, crossed near the base by a broad band

of black. The song of the Baltimore oriole is a clear, varied whistle or warble. Its call is a plaintive whistle. Caterpillars, ants, grasshoppers, wasps, and beetles are the bird's principal foods. Little vegetable matter is eaten. The Baltimore oriole breeds as far north as Manitoba and New Brunswick, and it winters in Central America. During the nesting season five or six eggs are laid, white, scrawled with blackish brown. In the West, Bullock's oriole takes the place of the Baltimore oriole. The western bird has yellow cheeks instead of black but in form and habits it is much like its eastern cousin. It is a most striking bird in orange and black. It is a good singer and a clever nest builder. The food habits do not differ essentially from those of the Baltimore oriole.

Baltimore Oriole

Brewer's Blackbird

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD

(Euphagus cyanocephalus)

Length, 10 inches

THE glossy black coat of this bird shimmers in the sunlight, reflecting purple, blue, and green. The bill is black, and the eye is pale yellow. The nest is usually placed about thirty feet from the ground in trees or bushes. It is constructed with a rough coarse foundation of twigs, plant stalks, bark, and rootlets mixed and held together with mud and lined with finer similar materials and horse and cow hair. Usually five dull greenish-white eggs are laid. Brewer's blackbirds live in flocks. They eat fruit, but also destroy great numbers of harmful insects and grubs. Its breeding ground extends east as far as the Great Plains and northward into Canada. It winters over most of its breeding ground in the United States and south as far as Guatemala.

In the autumn the rusty blackbird, a relative, appears in the grain fields. The plumage of the male is almost pure black with a greenish gloss, while the young bird is a rusty black.

BRONZED GRACKLE

(Quiscalus quiscala aeneus)

Length, 11½ inches

THOUGH of habits and size similar to those of its eastern and western relatives, the bronzed grackle differs in having a distinct bronze appearance of the body and in lacking the rainbow reflections that distinguish the purple grackle. The whole head and neck are generally a dark peacock blue or green. A large portion of its time is spent on the ground. As it is walking and turning its head this way and that, it reflects the sun from its bronzed back. During migration, it is found within the range of the purple grackle. It is most useful in spring, when it follows in the plowman's furrow, gathering, for food, the grubs and worms as they are turned up. Like other grackles, this bird does much good during the breeding season by eating destructive insects. Snails, small fish, salamanders, and an occasional mouse also are eaten by this bird. Large flocks, however, sometimes cause considerable damage to standing crops.

Bronzed Grackle

Purple Grackle

PURPLE GRACKLE

(Quiscalus quiscala)

Length, 12½ inches

THE grackle is the largest of the northern blackbirds, and is easily distinguished from starlings, with which it frequently associates, by its waddling, walking gait and its long tail. Dark, metallic plumage, which reflects the deeper rainbow hues, sets apart the purple grackle from others of its kind. It has pale yellow eyes and a long fan-shaped tail that often is "keeled" in flight. The female's color is duller than that of the male. Purple grackles migrate in flocks, and parks and cemeteries are favorite dwelling places for large colonies. The notes of this bird are harsh and cracked but make a pleasing medley when heard in chorus. Its nest sometimes is built in pine trees as high as thirty feet from the ground. Again, the nest may be found among the bushes and even in a hole in a tree. From three to seven pale blue eggs are laid, blotched and scrawled with brown and black. The grackle eats grain throughout the year.

EVENING GROSBEAK

(Hesperiphona vespertina)

Length, 8¼ inches

FROM the far northwest, at rare, irregular intervals, comes the evening grosbeak. Its call is short and cheery. The male is large, thick-set, and heavy billed, with a black crown, yellow forehead and body, black wings, and black tail. The inner wing quills are white. The female's body is brownish gray, tinged with yellow, and the wings and tail are black with white markings. The evening grosbeak ranges all over western North America and winters regularly eastward as far as Minnesota. At irregular intervals it appears during the winter in the North Atlantic States. Its food consists of the buds and seeds of trees—box-elders and maples are favorites. Its nest is built far above the ground in a coniferous or willow tree. It is a flat, slight structure, made of twigs and roots, and is sometimes lined with lichens. Three or four clear green eggs blotched with pale brown are laid.

A variety known as the western grosbeak comes from western Canada down through the mountains to Mexico.

Evening Grosbeak

PINE GROSBEAK

(Pinicola enucleator)

Length, 9 inches

THE pine grosbeak, like the evening grosbeak, would be a notable figure in any gathering of birds, but coming, as it does, in the barren time of the year, when the bird population is small and the trees are leafless, it is as conspicuous as it is welcome. This bird loves the great pine forests of Canada and the United States, hence its name, though it is sometimes called the nomad of the north. One may find it at work on the pine cones seeking the seeds on which it feeds. This bird has no real economic value except perhaps in the distribution of seeds of trees. Its food consists mainly of buds from pine and spruce trees and the berries of the Virginia juniper and the mountain ash.

The adult male bird is unmistakable, with its beautiful rosy-red body and its gray back, wings, and tail. It is similar in form to the male evening grosbeak. The female also is like the female evening grosbeak during the summer. When traveling the pine grosbeak feeds on the seeds of other trees and bushes. Its note is a clear whistle of three or four sounds, easily imitated. Its song is long and melodious. This bird is said to breed very early, even when there is snow about. The breeding is no doubt irregular because nests have been found in the summer. Northern North America is the range of the pine grosbeak. It winters south as far as Indiana and New Jersey. On rare occasions individuals have been seen as far south as Kentucky and Washington, D. C. There are several varieties of the pine grosbeak in the western part of the United States. The Rocky

Pine Grosbeak—Continued

Mountain pine grosbeak lives in the Rocky Mountains from west central Idaho and Montana to northern New Mexico. The California pine grosbeak breeds in the central Sierra Nevada mountains in California. The Alaska pine grosbeak breeds from northwestern Alaska and northwestern Mackenzie to northern Washington and winters south to eastern British Columbia and Montana. The Kodiak pine grosbeak is a bird of southern Alaska coming south in winter along the coast to British Columbia. In the grosbeak family the cardinal or redbird is perhaps the most familiar, since it is more generally distributed throughout the southern half of the United States. The rose-breasted grosbeak is the species of the eastern States, while the black-headed grosbeak is a native of the west. It may be found anywhere from eastern Nebraska to California and from British Columbia south to the plateau of Mexico.

Pine Grosbeak

Purple Finch

PURPLE FINCH

(Carpodacus purpureus)

Length, 6¼ inches

THE purple finch is a beautiful songster, and in the early spring, just when the snow is leaving and the air is bracing, its musical warble is loud, long-continued, and sweet. Its call note is a querulous whistle. Despite its name, the male bird is dull rosy red and the female is streaked brownish gray. Purple finches are erratic wanderers, traveling on no fixed schedule but seeming to feel at home wherever they find themselves. Except when nesting, they usually travel in small flocks, and frequently remain for weeks in favored localities. Sometimes this bird does considerable damage to budding fruit trees, such as the peach and the cherry. In winter any seed-bearing tree will furnish a satisfactory meal. Its nest is made of bark, twigs, rootlets, and grasses and is placed at almost any height in evergreen or orchard trees. The eggs, four in number, are greenish blue with strong blackish specks.

HOUSE FINCH

(Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis)

Length, 5½ inches

BECAUSE of its food habits, the house finch, redhead, or linnet, as it is variously called, has an unenviable reputation, second only, so far as its family is concerned, to the English sparrow. This bird is a seed eater and occasionally eats wild berries. It is particularly common in California, and as this state is devoted to fruit-growing all the year round, the house finches get more than their share. With its strong beak the bird has no difficulty in breaking the skin of the hardest fruit and feasting upon the pulp, thereby spoiling the fruit and giving weaker-billed birds a chance to sample and acquire a taste for something that they, otherwise, might not molest. Extensive cultivation, of course, has greatly reduced the bird's former natural supply of weed seeds, and this probably is responsible, in some measure, for its onslaughts on the fruit crops. The house finch eats only a small proportion of animal food.

House Finch

Pine Siskin

PINE SISKIN

(Spinus pinus)

Length, 4¾ inches

In general habits, the pine finch or siskin, is much like the goldfinch. It feeds on weed seeds and catkins, and on seeds of cone-bearing trees. Its song and call notes also are much like those of the goldfinch, but they have a slight nasal twang. The plumage above is gray or brown, and is conspicuously streaked with these same colors. The wings and tail are dull black. The middle and greater wing-coverts are tipped with white, and the inner wing quills are edged with the same. The basal portion of the wing and tail feathers are pale yellow. The underparts of the bird are dull white except perhaps on the abdomen. They build their nests in cone-bearing trees at any distance from the ground. The nest is made of rootlets and grasses, and lined with pine needles and hair. The eggs, from three to five in number, are greenish white, speckled with reddish brown. The breeding area extends north from the northern boundary of the United States.

GOLDFINCH

(Spinus tristis)

Length, 5 inches

THE goldfinch is known locally as the yellow bird, the wild canary, the lettuce bird, or the thistle bird. It is small and sociable and is one of the most attractive of our common birds. Except in the breeding season they associate in flocks. While clad in his goldfinch garb, the male is easily recognized, but in winter wher he dons the dull yellow-olive dress of his mate, he is harder to see. The nest is built of plant fibers and grasses, and lined with thistledown. It is usually placed in the forks of some bush. Four or five unmarked, pale bluish eggs are deposited. Goldfinches do not nest before the latter half of June. Seeds form its chief food. The goldfinch winters in the United States and breeds from Virginia and Missouri as far north as Labrador in the section east of the Rocky Mountains.

A near relative of the goldfinch, the Arkansas goldfinch, resides exclusively in the western states. A slightly variant form is the green-backed goldfinch found in southwestern United States.

Goldfinch

English Sparrow

ENGLISH SPARROW

(Passer domesticus)

Length, 5¾ inches

IMPORTED into America and liberated at Brooklyn, N. Y., about 1850, the English sparrow, because of its bullying attitude toward other birds and its destructive habits, is looked upon as an undesirable alien. Hardy and adaptable, it is able to stand our most severe winters. The bird is stocky with upperparts of reddish-brown, streaked with black, and its underparts are grayish-white. It should not be confused with our desirable native sparrows. Grain, fruit, peas, and beans are favorite foods of this bird, although it also feeds, to some extent, on insect pests. In the cities, most of the bird's food is waste-material gathered from the streets. The eggs, four to seven in number, usually are white, evenly marked with olive varying from plain white to almost uniform olive brown. Two broods of young in a season are common, but sometimes three, four, and five are raised. The English sparrow now ranges over the entire United States and southern Canada.

SNOW BUNTING

(Plectrophenax nivalis)

Length, 8 inches

THE snow bunting is a hardy and beautiful winter visitor to the United States from the northland. Sometimes this bird is called "snowflake" because when winter comes it blows in like a true snowflake, settles down on the hillsides, and feeds in the snow. This bird shares some common traits with the horned lark. Both birds prefer the open spaces and are frequently seen together in fields or along streams. The buntings are usually seen in flocks numbering from a dozen to several hundred. Reports indicate that they feed almost exclusively on the ground. The snow bunting seems to be a very nervous, restless bird. White is the prevailing tone of the plumage of the snow bunting. The song is a low twittering while feeding, and a short whistle when in flight. The nest is made of moss and grass and is sunk in the moss that covers much of Arctic America. The eggs are three to five in number and are pale greenish white, specked with brown.

Snow Bunting

Savanna Sparrow

SAVANNA SPARROW

(Passerculus sandwichensis savanna)

Length, 5½ inches

THIS sparrow prefers fields to dooryards. It is common in fields, especially those near the coast, and is likely to be mistaken for several of the field sparrows. Its breast and sides are streaked with brown and it has a touch of yellow before the eyes, and on the bend of the wing. The savanna sparrow's breeding ground is in the northern part of the United States and northward, and its winter home is in the southern section of the country. Its nest is of grasses, usually placed in a hollow in the ground, concealed by grasses and weeds. Four eggs that are grayish, spotted with brown, are deposited. Its food habits are much like those of other sparrows. The notes are a weak trill or twitter or a short chirp. A peculiarity is its habit of singing while on the ground.

Variants of this species are the western savanna sparrow, paler in color and found in the plains, Bryant's sparrow, smaller and darker found in California, Belding's sparrow also in California, and the large-billed sparrow differing as its name suggests, also in California.

VESPER SPARROW

(Pooecetes gramineus)

Length, 6¼ inches

ITS HABIT of singing at dusk gives the vesper sparrow its name. It is also known as the bay-winged sparrow, or the grass finch. Its song resembles that of the song sparrow. Two white feathers, prominently shown on either side of the tail when the bird flies, make it easy to identify. Its nest is fashioned from coarse grasses or weed stalks, and lined with finer grasses, rootlets, and long hair. It is placed in a weedy field or pasture. Four or five whitish eggs, marked and blotched with brown are laid. The vesper sparrow's range covers eastern North America from Virginia to southern Canada. It winters in the southern part of the United States. Like other members of the sparrow family, this bird is a notable seed eater, but does not limit itself to a vegetable diet. During the summer it feeds on insects and feeds its young the same food.

The western vesper sparrow is found in western North America except along the coast. The Oregon vesper sparrow is found on the Pacific Coast.

Vesper Sparrow

Grasshopper Sparrow

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW

(Ammodramus savannarum australis)

Length, 4½ inches

FROM the insect-like tone of its song, the grasshopper sparrow derives its name, and it can hardly be mistaken for that of any other bird of the fields. It is small and short-tailed, with a streaked back pattern that suggests "feather scales." Its crown is blackish with a central buffy stripe, and the nape is brown and gray. The sides of the head and breast are buff. A grass-lined hollow in a field serves as a nest for this sparrow. Usually it is arched over as a protection against the sun and to conceal the eggs, four to five of which, white, brown-specked, are laid in June. When alarmed, the grasshopper sparrow darts off and drops suddenly to the ground some distance away. It is a common dweller in old fields where sorrel and daisies grow, and as a destroyer of insect pests it is most efficient. This bird is found in summer in the section of the United States east of the Rocky Mountains and it winters in the South.

SEASIDE SPARROW

(Ammospiza maritima)

Length, 6 inches

ONE OF the dwellers in the salt marshes along the seashore is the seaside sparrow. It nests on the ground and runs about through the thick grasses, taking wing only when hard pressed. Its plumage is grayish green with no black markings, and it has a yellow spot before the eye. The habits of the seaside sparrow and of the sharp-tailed sparrow, frequently found in the same marshes, are much the same. The seaside finch, as it is sometimes called, is migratory, coming during the latter part of April and remaining until late in October; sometimes southern tribes remain in the same locality throughout the year. During the latter part of May, three or four pale greenish- or pale brownish-white eggs, finely spotted all over and wreathed with rufous and dull purple are laid. The seaside sparrow feeds on small crabs and seeds of marsh grasses, and does not come in contact to any great extent with cultivated crops.

Seaside Sparrow

White-Throated Sparrow

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW

(Zonotrichia albicollis)

Length, 7¼ inches

THE white-throated sparrow is considered by many as the most handsome and the sweetest singer of our native sparrows. Its high clear song has intervals that conform closely to the musical scale. Its call and alarm note is a metallic chirp. It is often found scratching about among the leaves in the underbrush. Weed seeds and wild berries comprise its diet. The adult is recognized by the white throat. In the young this is less prominent. Its nest is usually placed on the ground along the border of some woods or in a swamp. It is made of grass and leaves and in it are laid five eggs of a pale greenish-blue color, thickly spotted with brown. North America east of the Rocky Mountains is the range of the white-throated sparrow: Its breeding ground extends from the northern part of the United States to Labrador and the Hudson Bay country. It migrates and winters in companies. Its winter home is in the southern half of the United States. Some remain as far north as New Jersey and Ohio all winter.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW

(Zonotrichia leucophrys)

Length, 6¾ inches

EXCEPT in the mountain ranges and in the extreme northern parts of the United States, the white-crowned sparrow is known only as a migrant. During these visits it rarely sings. Its song is a clear, piping *see-dee-dee-deee*. The call note is a sharp chirp. As its name indicates, the bird has a white crown, bordered with black. The black covers the space before the eyes. In its relative west of the Rockies, this space is white. The white-crowned sparrow usually nests beneath patches of brush or in bushes. Its four or five eggs are white, heavily spotted with brown. The breeding area of this bird extends northward from northern United States and in the high ranges of this country to Mexico. Like other sparrows its food consists chiefly of weed seeds. Its favorite seems to be the rough pigweed. In addition to its vegetable food, it eats some harmful insects.

Nuttal's sparrow, a variant of this species, is found along the Pacific coast. Gamble's sparrow is found in western North America

White-Crowned Sparrow

Tree Sparrow

TREE SPARROW

(Spizella arborea)

Length, 5¾ inches

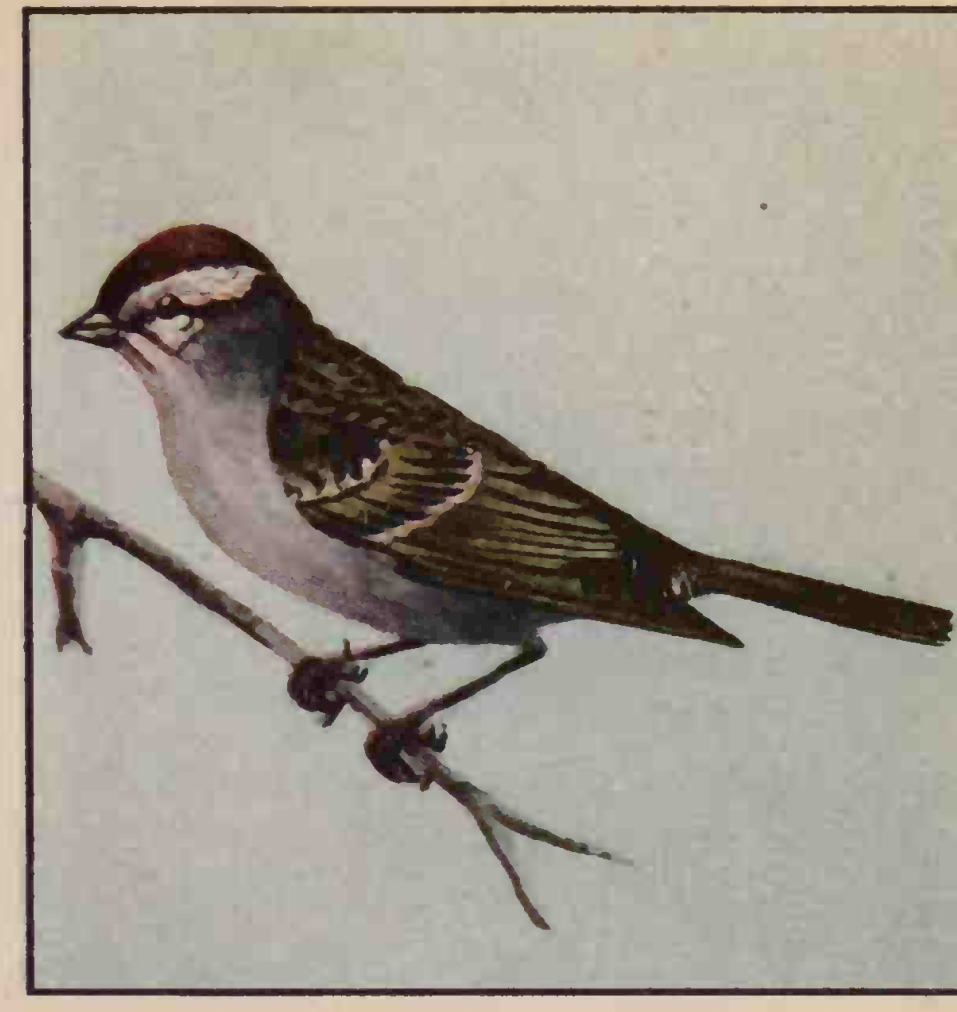
DURING the summer the tree sparrow is a resident of the Arctic region, and in winter it takes up its residence in the northern half of the United States east of the Plains. It usually appears in October and until spring may be seen in fields and gardens. The tree sparrow's crown is reddish brown with no black about the head. It has a blackish brown spot in the middle of the breast and considerable brown on the back and wings. From October until April, companies of tree sparrows gather weed seeds, usually feeding near woods or along the hedgerows where they roost and rest. The song is strong, sweet, and musical and ends in a low warble. The call note is a musical chirp. Oddly, the tree sparrow usually builds its nest on the ground, but sometimes at a low elevation in a bush. Its eggs are pale greenish blue, specked with brown. Its breeding ground extends as far north as Labrador and the Hudson Bay.

CHIPPING SPARROW

(Spizella passerina)

Length, 5¼ inches

FRIENDLY as well as useful, the chipping sparrow, or chippy, as it is familiarly known, is probably the most widely known and loved of our native sparrows. Vines covering the sides of porches are favorite nesting places for this bird, provided it is not disturbed by cats or by the pugnacious English sparrow. The food of chippy is made up largely of insects, worms, and seeds, and its young are fed entirely upon insects. In its nest, which is small and cup-shaped and made of rootlets and lined with horse-hair, early in May are laid three to five bluish-green eggs, speckled chiefly around the large end with blackish brown. The song of the chipping sparrow is a rapidly chanted *chip, chip, chip*, continued for several seconds, and this gives it its name. A sharp *chip* is its call note. Chippy has a chestnut crown and a black forehead with a black line through the eye. In appearance it is similar to the tree sparrow.



Chipping Sparrow

Field Sparrow

FIELD SPARROW

(Spizella pusilla)

Length, 5¾ inches

THE reddish bill and the plain breast of the field sparrow help to differentiate it from the other sparrows. Dry pastures, stubble fields, and bushy side hills are favorite nesting and feeding places for the field sparrow. Its nest is a frail structure of grass and weeds, lined with finer grasses, and is placed on the ground or in bushes, briars, or weed patches. The four or five white eggs are marked with reddish brown. Its diet consists chiefly of weed seeds. It has a pinkish brown bill. Its crown and ear coverts are brown with no black markings. The back is reddish brown and the breast and sides are tinged with brown. The field sparrow breeds from the Gulf States north to southern Canada and winters in the southern portions of the United States. The western field sparrow is found on the Great Plains. It has longer wings and tail. It breeds from Nebraska and South Dakota to eastern Montana, and winters south to southern Texas and Louisiana. Worthen's sparrow or the Mexican sparrow is a straggler from over the Mexican border.

SLATE-COLORED JUNCO

(Junco hyemalis)

Length, 6 inches

THIS slate-gray bird arrives early in September from its northern breeding grounds, and from that time until April, it is one of our commonest birds. Its song is a sweet, simple trill. It is recognized by its gray and white plumage and its flesh-colored bill. In flight, white outer tail feathers are visible. It feeds on weed seeds and insects of various kinds. In its breeding ground, which extends northward from the extreme northern portions of the United States will be found the junco's nest beside a stone, in a bunch of weeds, or under a small shrub, where it is well concealed. It is made of grasses, and in it are deposited three or four whitish eggs sprinkled with reddish brown. The eastern bird goes far up into the northwest, sometimes to the limit of trees on the lower Coppermine and Mackenzie rivers. Many cross the Rocky Mountains up to the headwaters of the Yukon.

The western varieties of the juncos show interesting variations of color, but the habits of nesting, feeding, and singing are much alike.

Slate-Colored Junco

Song Sparrow

SONG SPARROW

(Melospiza melodia)

Length, 6½ inches

THE song sparrow is one of the most popular, abundant, and widely distributed of the sparrow family. Being hardy, it often remains in the northern states throughout the winter, although the majority of these birds go farther south, returning northward about the first of March. It is the very pleasing and musical song, strongly resembling that of the canary, that gives this bird its name and makes it so popular a member of the bird world. The song sparrow is usually found in bushes, vines, and hedges but often appears also about the house, even in the larger cities. Its nest of grass is built on the ground or in a low bush. The eggs are bluish white spotted with brown, and number from three to five. The song sparrow breeds from Virginia and Missouri to southern Canada. In winter it migrates to the territory southward from Massachusetts and Ohio. Local relatives are found west of the Rocky Mountains.

FOX SPARROW

(Passerella iliaca)

Length, 6½ inches

In quiet swamps and open woods, the fox sparrow may be seen in winter, scratching energetically in the fallen leaves. It is one of the master musicians of the bird world. Its song is a loud, clear and melodious carol, and is especially effective when sung in chorus by a large flock. The call note is a soft chirp. The fox sparrow's top coat is reddish brown and gray. Its rump and tail are wholly reddish brown and its breast and sides are spotted with the same color. The fox sparrow does its share in the destruction of harmful weed seeds which make up the bulk of its food supply. East of the Rocky Mountains and from New Brunswick and Manitoba northward, the fox sparrow will be found during its nesting season. During the winter it lives in the southern states. The nest is built of grass lined with fine grass and feathers. Four to five pale bluish-green eggs with reddish-brown and chestnut spots are laid.

Fox Sparrow

Towhee

TOWHEE

(Pipilo erythrophthalmus)

Length, 8 inches

BLACK, white, and brown is the garb of the male towhee, chewink, or ground robin as it is variously known. Its mate wears brown and white that blends well with the leaves. The towhee gets much of its food from foraging on the ground. It has a peculiar way of scratching, using its feet alternately like a domestic hen. Hibernating beetles and the young of other insects are the objects of its search. The towhee also wages war on the potato bug. Weed seeds and small wild fruits are its only vegetable food. Another peculiarity is its disregard of one who approaches the nest. The towhee breeds in eastern North America from the Gulf states to southern Canada. It migrates to the southern states in the winter. Strips of bark, grass, and leaves are used in building the nest which is usually on the ground. Its eggs are white, or pale pink dotted with reddish brown.

A relative, with less white on its tail and with white around its eyes is found along the Southern Atlantic coast.

CALIFORNIA TOWHEE

(Pipilo crissalis)

Length, 9 inches

THE California towhee, or crissal bunting is a fluffy, brown, sparrow-like bird common to the southwest. The entire upperparts of this bird are a dull grayish brown, slightly deeper on the head. The throat is a light rufous and usually inclined to be dusky. The nest is generally located in a bush or tree not far from the ground. It is made of inner bark, twigs, and weed stems, and is lined with plant stems and sometimes horse hair and wool. The eggs, four or five in number, are pale blue spotted with purplish brown. The Oregon towhee, one of the spotted towhees, is found in western United States and Mexico. In southern California is found the San Diego towhee, a glossy black bird with white markings on the wings. The Arctic towhee has white markings on both wings and tail and its shoulders are heavily streaked with white. Albert's towhee is the largest of the plain towhees. It lives in the desert regions of Arizona and southeastern California. The green-tailed towhee is found in mountain districts of western United States.

California Towhee

Cardinal

CARDINAL

(Cardinalis cardinalis)

Length, 8¾ inches

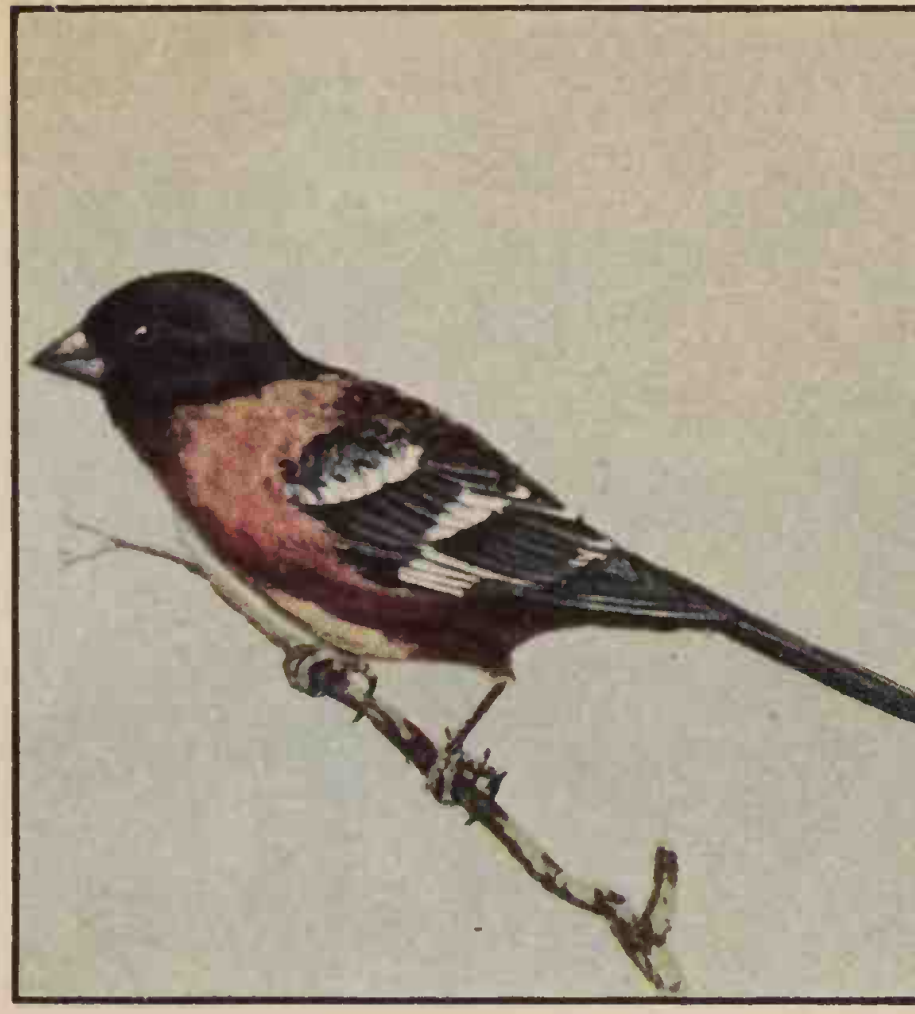
Its striking plumage and rich, varied song make the cardinal, or redbird, an outstanding figure in the bird world. Although a southern bird, the cardinal is hardy and often remains throughout the winter in the northern part of its range. The bird is not commonly seen, however, in the northern United States. Though somewhat shy, the cardinal does not entirely avoid the vicinity of homes, though it prefers more secluded resorts. Wild shrubbery is its chosen haunt, but it also visits gardens, fields, and open woodlands, where it gleans its food supply of seeds, berries, fruits, and insects. The male bird wears a vivid red coat, has a large bill and a high crest. The color of the female is much duller and the crest is less prominent. The nest is a frail structure of twigs placed in a thicket or bush. Its eggs are greenish-blue with reddish-brown spots. Its breeding area extends from the Gulf of Mexico to New York and Iowa.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK

(Hedymeles melanocephala)

Length, 8¼ inches

ALTHOUGH the black-headed grosbeak is a bird of the forest, it seems to prefer the deciduous trees and shrubbery for a nesting place. The male is a handsome bird, flashy in flight, with its black, white, and yellow contrast. It has a heavy short beak and long pointed wings. The male is a good housekeeper and relieves his mate when on the nest incubating the young and later helps to rear them. This grosbeak sometimes destroys early fruit and attacks peas and beans. Instead of being regarded as an enemy by western orchardists, however, the black-headed grosbeak should be esteemed as a friend, since it is a foe of some of the worst pests of horticulture, including scale insects, which compose a fourth of its food. The nest is a frail structure loosely put together with fine twigs, weed stems, grass, and rootlets. Three or four bluish-green eggs, speckled and blotched with chestnut, are laid.



Black-Headed Grosbeak

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK

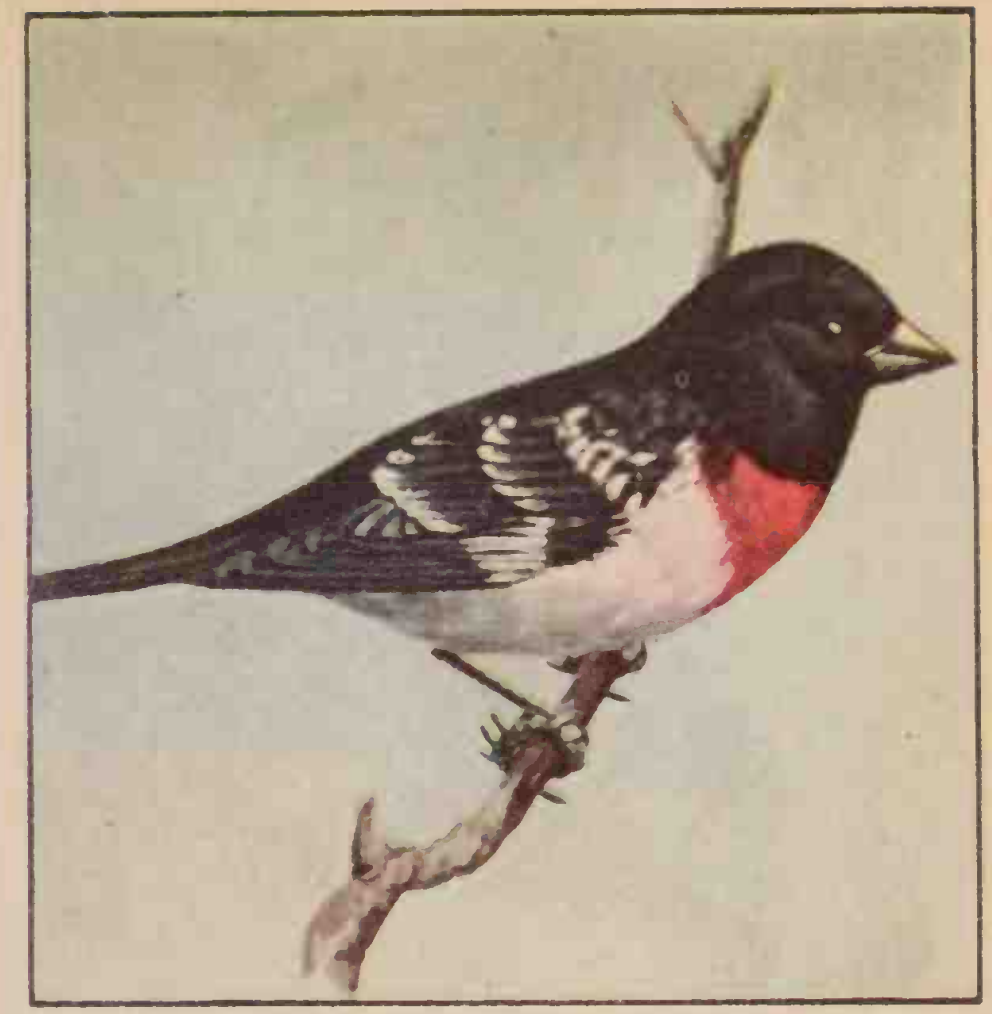
(Hedymeles ludovicanus)

Length, 8¼ inches

In the northern parts of the Eastern States, the rose-breasted grosbeak atones fully for what northerners lose as a result of the southerly distribution of the cardinal. Its beauty and song equal that of its southern rival, although there is a distinct difference. Almost all observers are impressed with the wholesomeness of this grosbeak. It is seldom nervous and does not permit trivial things to bother it. Cardinal-like, the male has a great attachment for his mate while she is on the nest. The male rose-breast, as its name indicates, has rose-colored feathers on its breast and on the underwing coverts. Its upperparts are black and white. The female resembles a large striped sparrow. Swamps and small patches of woods are the favorite haunts of the rose-breast. Sometimes this bird is found in orchards. It is not very active and does not move about much and can be easily traced by its song, a rich, full, whistling carol nearly always beginning with a sharp *chip*. Its call note is a deep-toned chirp. Although the song of the rose-breast is somewhat like that of the robin, it has a more flowing, joyous quality. This bird is noted for its clear melodious notes, which are poured forth in generous measure. The rose-breast sings even at mid-day during summer, when the intense heat has silenced almost every other songster. Unlike the robin, the rose-breast often sings when in flight.

The nest of this grosbeak is a loose, frail cradle of twigs hung in a tree at a low elevation or in a thicket. Its eggs are bluish green

spotted with brown. The northern half of the United States and southern Canada, east of the Rocky Mountains, is the breeding ground of the rose-breasted grosbeak, and its winter quarters are in Central America. The rose-breasted grosbeak is held in high esteem because of its habit of preying upon the Colorado potato bug. At least one-tenth of its food is made up of these potato-eating beetles. It not only eats the adults but also consumes the larvae and feeds a great many to the nestlings. The vegetable food of the grosbeak consists of buds and blossoms of forest trees and seeds. He is sometimes accused of injuring orchards by eating the blossoms and fruit, but his raids on the potato beetles far offset the damage he does. The rose-breasted grosbeak's beautiful plumage and sweet song are not its sole claim to favor, for few birds are more beneficial to agriculture.



Rose-Breasted Grosbeak

INDIGO BUNTING

(Passerina cyanea)

Length, 5¾ inches

IN THE pastures, along the edges of swamps, or along roadsides that are lined with trees or bushes, you will meet the indigo bunting, a jolly summer songster, any time between the latter part of May and September. It is said that no bird outside the tropics has such an unusual blue as the male indigo bunting. The bird is a deep ultramarine blue, and seems to be variously colored when viewed in different lights. At least there is no reason to confuse it with other blue birds. A general description would read: Front of head and chin, rich indigo-blue, greener on back and underparts; wings dusky brown, with blue edges to the coverts; tail feathers also blue-edged; bill and feet dark; general shape, rounded and canary-like, resembling the goldfinch. The female is brownish in color, with a faint tinge of blue on wings and tail. The male usually has some favorite perch upon which he spends a large part of his time singing. This perch is nearly always at the top of a tall bush or tree. Being a very showy bird he seems not to miss a chance to exhibit himself on a fence rail or tilting on the reeds or dodging about in a flock of English sparrows. The bunting belongs to the tree-loving and tree-nesting part of its tribe. Its size ranks with that of the smaller sparrows, coming between the field and song sparrows and being only slightly larger than the chipping sparrow. The song of this bunting is a sprightly little warble with many

canary-like notes. Its call note is a sharp chirp.

The indigo bunting is most abundant east of the Mississippi River, although it ranges over all of the United States east of the Rocky Mountains and breeds as far north as Manitoba and New Brunswick. Four or five pale bluish-white eggs are laid in a nest made of grasses and placed at a low elevation in a shrub or bush. In winter, the indigo lives in the tropical Central American countries. The bunting's food consists mainly of seeds and berries with a goodly number of insects. Among the insects are found caterpillars, click beetles, snout-beetles and bugs of various kinds. The indigo bunting is one of our most valuable species and should be given rigid protection. Another beautiful bunting is the lazuli bunting which inhabits the western United States.

Indigo Bunting

Lazuli Bunting

LAZULI BUNTING

(Passerina amoena)

Length, 6 inches

THE lazuli bunting is a handsome songster of the mountains and valleys, and in the far West it replaces its indigo cousin of the East. A lover of the foothills, it is seldom found very high in the mountains. The most distinguishing feature of the male bird is the blue head, including the throat, breast, and shoulders. The lazuli bunting's habits are like those of the indigo bunting and it frequents the same kind of territory, usually building its nest in a bush or in the lower branches of a tree only a few feet from the ground. Its eggs are very pale bluish white. The range and breeding ground of this bird take in the western part of the United States from the Great Plains to the Pacific coast and north along the coast to British Columbia. In winter, the lazuli moves south into Mexico. It is a southern bird of such a quiet manner that it is not very well known.

LARK BUNTING

(Calamospiza melanocorys)

Length, 7¾ inches

METHODICAL and apparently well organized as a species, the lark bunting usually travels in large flocks even at nesting time, all members of the flock taking wing or alighting at the same time. The male lark bunting is black and white and the female is brown and gray. The white-winged "blackbird," as it is sometimes called, has a habit similar to that of the skylark of mounting into the air while singing and then descending on set wings. The song is a lively, sweetly modulated warble. Under a tuft of grass or a small bush, the lark bunting conceals its nest, and in it are laid four or five bluish eggs. The lark bunting is found most abundantly in the western United States from Kansas and Colorado north to Manitoba. On the breeding grounds these birds are rather shy in habits, especially the females. They are found frequently feeding silently among the flowers on the prairie.

Lark Bunting

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